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Ron to Clint: No PW raid

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Washington (News Bureau)—Tough-guy actor Clint Eastwood urged President Reagan in a phone call in November to support a planned raid into Laos by a Vietnam war hero in search of American PWs, the White House said yesterday. But Reagan rejected Eastwood's request after consulting with aides.

Officials from the White House and Department of Defense said they told associates of James (Bo) Gritz, a Vietnam veteran from Westchester, Calif., to pass the word not to proceed. But Gritz team members said the messages they received in Southeast Asia told them the President supported them, the Los Angeles Times reported yesterday.

Gritz led a patrol of Americans and anti-Communist guerrillas from a base in Thailand on a search for PWs into Laos last Nov. 27 and again in January.

Gritz reportedly found nothing, but the missions sparked fighting that included loss of lives. Laos and Thailand, a U.S. ally, complained bitterly about the raid.

DEPUTY WHITE House Press Secretary Larry Speakes said, "He (Eastwood) did speak to the President" about the private raid into Laos by Gritz, 44, a retired Special Forces lieutenant colonel.

"The President asked his staff to inquire," Speakes said. "They... said in their viewpoint it would not be a good idea, would run counter to the various moves we're making on other fronts." Reagan took the call at his ranch near Santa Barbara, Calif., during the Thanksgiving holidays.

Speakes said Reagan accepted National Security Council officials advice that the U.S. should not sanction such private missions.

The administration opposes such rescue efforts because they undercut official U.S. "moves... on other fronts" to resolve the lingering PW question, Speakes said.

Administration officials and council aides contacted Eastwood to outline their reasons for opposing the raid, and to urge him to withdraw his support.

THE SENATE Intelligence Committee has been investigating reports that Gritz had been initially encouraged by U.S. intelligence officials.

There were 2,494 Americans unaccounted for in Asia after the Vietnam war. U.S. officials believe that most, if not all, of them are dead.

Vietnam and Laos have denied reports some Americans may be imprisoned, but the possibility has not been completely ruled out.

White House officials generally confirmed an account of the Reagan-Eastwood conversation contained in the Los Angeles Times.

The newspaper said Eastwood, in explaining the Gritz mission to Reagan, also told the President he had contributed \$50,000 of his own money.

Eastwood urged the government to become officially involved in PW rescue efforts rather leave support for them up to individuals, the Times said.

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